

REMARKS

In response to the Advisory Action of February 14, 2006, Applicants present the foregoing amendments to the claims and remarks in connection with a Request for Continued Examination. Upon considering these amendments and remarks, it is believed that the Examiner will agree that all claims patentably distinguish over the cited prior art and should be formally allowed.

In the Office Action of December 1, 2005, the Examiner asserted that, "the claims do not distinguish between the first, second, and third layers." Thus, according to the Examiner, "a single mass of wet processed bonded fibrous mat comprising thermoplastic polymer staple fibers and thermoplastic bicomponent fibers[, as taught in the Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. references,] can be considered a multi-layer article comprising multiple layers of identical fibers." On this basis, claims 1 and 13 stood rejected as "anticipated."

As amended, independent claims 1 and 13 now explicitly provide that the first and second layers of wet processed mat that are "directly bonded" together comprise different fiber formulations. Clearly, Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. relate to nonwoven laminate fabrics of identical structure. More specifically both of these patents disclose a three layer laminate wherein the inner ply 12 sandwiched between the outer plies 14 and 16 is made from meltblown microfibers. In particular, the Examiner's attention is directed to Oleszczuk et al. at col. 2 lines 27-29, col. 3 lines 34-37, and col. 4 lines 53-55 and 64-65. In addition

the Examiner's attention is directed to Lickfield et al. at col. 2 lines 29-31, col. 3 lines 46-48 and col. 4 lines 23-24.

The inventions of claims 1 and 13 clearly differ from the single mass of wet processed bonded fibrous mat taught in Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield, et al., even if the mat is considered to comprise multiple layers of identical fibers as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, these references fail to provide a proper basis for rejecting amended independent claims 1 and 13, either as anticipated or obvious. Therefore, these claims as well as claims 4-5, 9-12, 14-15 and 19-22 dependent thereon should be formally allowed.

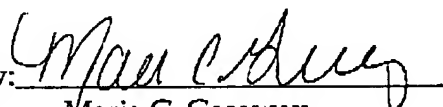
With regard to claims 6-8 and 16-18, the primary references to Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. fail to teach or suggest a liner/insulator including first and second layers of wet processed mat directly bonded together, wherein the first and second layers have different fiber formulations. The secondary reference to Insley does in fact disclose providing layers with thicknesses of between 0.2 to 4.0 cm, as contended, but it does nothing to address this shortcoming of the primary references. Furthermore, the stated reason for combining the references (an "expectation of success") fails to supply the requisite substantial evidence of a motivation to combine these references, as is required to support a rejection based on obviousness. *See In re Sang-Su Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338, 1342, 61 USPQ2d 1430 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (holding arbitrary the Board's finding of obviousness because of inadequate explanation on motivation to combine, vacating, and remanding). Accordingly, claims 6-8 and 16-18

patentably distinguish over the art and should be allowed.

As for claim 23, the primary references to Oleszczuk et al. and Lickfield et al. fail to teach or suggest a liner/insulator including first and second layers of wet processed mat directly bonded together where those first and second layers have different fiber formulations. The secondary references to Bansal et al. and Malaney do nothing to address this shortcoming of the primary references. Accordingly, claim 23 patentably distinguishes over the art and should be allowed.

In summary, all pending claims patentably distinguish over the prior art and should be formally allowed. Upon careful review and consideration it is believed the Examiner will agree with this proposition. Accordingly, the early issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Any fees required in connection with this Response may be debited to Deposit Account 50-0568.

Respectfully submitted,

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